

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 916

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GR, US

SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS

1. SUMMARY: MOLYVIATIS, THE DIRECTOR OF PM CARAMANLIS' POLITICAL OFFICE, HAS EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN OVER THE SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO NEGOTIATIONS FOR A CYPRUS SETTLEMENT. IN THIS RESPECT HE SAID THAT THE PRIME MINISTER ATTACHES CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE TO THE PROPOSED MEETING BETWEEN SECRETARY KISSINGER AND THE GREEK AND TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTERS. HOWEVER, THE PRIMIN SEES THIS MEETING AS ALMOST A LAST CHANCE TO MOVE THE CYPRUS NEGOTIATIONS FORWARD. IN THE ABSENCE OF SUCCESS AT THE MEETING, MOLYVIATIS SAID HE WOULD NOT EXCLUDE A STRONG (UNSPECIFIED) GOG REACTION. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING A COURTESY CALL ON AMBASSADOR MOLYVIATIS, DIRECTOR OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S POLITICAL OFFICE, MOLYVIATIS EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN WITH RESPECT TO THE CYPRUS PROBLEM TO THE POLCOUNS. (MOLYVIATIS WAS RECALLED FROM BRUSSELS, WHERE HE WAS POLITICAL ADVISER OF THE GREEK MISSION TO NATO, TO SERVE AS DIPLOMATIC ADVISER TO THE PM.) MOLYVIATIS SAID HE DID NOT WANT TO SOUND ALARMIST OR TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION HE WAS GIVING US A WARNING OR A THREAT. HOWEVER, HE BELIEVED THE SITUATION FROM THE GOG POINT OF VIEW WAS SERIOUS ENOUGH THAT, AS A FRIEND OF THE US, HE SHOULD GIVE US A FRANK ASSESSMENT OF THE PRESENT MOOD OF PRIME MINISTER
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CARAMANLIS.

3. ACCORDING TO MOLYVIATIS, THE PRIMIN IS QUITE CONCERNED OVER THE CYPRUS PROBLEM, AND RELATIONS WITH TURKEY IN GENERAL, AND DISCOURAGED OVER THE PROSPECTS FOR PROGRESS IN REACHING A SETTLEMENT. THE PRIME MINISTER, HE SAID, ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE PROPOSED MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY AND FOREIGN MINISTERS BITSIOS AND ESENBEL, WHICH, MOLYVIATIS SAID, THE PM SEES ALMOST AS A LAST CHANCE TO BREAK THE DEADLOCK OVER CYPRUS.

4. MOLYVIATIS TOLD THE POLCOUNS THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT WE BE AWARE OF THE PM'S PRESENT MOOD. HE SAID THAT THE PM FELT THAT HE HAD MADE A NUMBER OF CONCESSIONS AND WAS DOING HIS BEST TO COOPERATE IN SEEKING A REASONABLE SOLUTION TO THE CYPRUS PROBLEM. HE HAD CONCEDED TO TURKEY ALL THAT TURKEY HAS BEEN SEEKING IN CYPRUS OVER THE PAST 15 YEARS. IN RETURN, HOWEVER, THE TURKS WERE NOT WILLING TO MAKE ANY REAL CONCESSIONS AND IN FACT EVEN REFUSED TO ENTER INTO SERIOUS SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS. THIS WAS NOT ONLY TRUE IN THE INTERCOMMUNAL TALKS IN CYPRUS BUT WAS ALSO THE CASE WITH RESPECT TO THE PM'S PROPOSAL THAT THE GOG AND THE GOT JOINTLY TAKE THE AEGEAN ISSUE TO THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE HAS STILL BEEN NO OFFICIAL REPLY TO THE PM'S PROPOSAL FROM THE GOT, ALTHOUGH PM IRMAK HAS BEEN MAKING VARIOUS PUBLIC STATEMENTS ABOUT THE TURKISH REACTION TO THE PROPOSAL.

5. MOLYVIATIS SAID HE FELT THAT THE PRIME MINISTER, WHOM HE KNOWS WELL AND WITH WHOM HE IS IN CONSTANT CONTACT, FEELS THAT HE HAS BEEN PUSHED ABOUT AS FAR AS HE CAN BE IN TRYING TO BE ACCOMMODATING ON THE CYPRUS ISSUE. MOLYVIATIS SAID WE SHOULD NOT TAKE THIS LIGHTLY, GIVEN THE PERSONALITY OF THE PM. HE SAID CARAMANLIS IS A DELIBERATE, THOUGHTFUL MAN WHO WEIGHS ALL FACTORS VERY CAREFULLY BEFORE MAKING A DECISION OR TAKING A POSITION. MOREOVER, THREE FACTORS SHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND IN ASSESSING THE PM'S PRESENT MOOD. CARAMANLIS IS A "DYNAMIC" PERSONALITY AND A MAN OF ACTION. THE SELF-RESTRAINT HE HAS DEMONSTRATED OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS IS, IN MOLYVIATIS' VIEW, OUT OF CHARACTER AND THEREFORE ALL THE MORE SIGNIFICANT AS

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EVIDENCE THAT CARAMANLIS SINCERELY DESIRES TO WORK WITH THE USG IN SEEKING A REASONABLE SETTLEMENT OVER THE CYPRUS ISSUE. ANOTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IS THE PM'S GREAT SENSE OF PERSONAL PRIDE AND OF NATIONAL DIGNITY. THIRDLY, ALTHOUGH MOLYVIATIS STRESSED THIS WAS OF FAR LESSER IMPORTANCE, WAS THE MATTER OF THE PM'S POPULARITY OR PUBLIC IMAGE AND HOW HIS ACTIONS COULD AFFECT THE POPULAR SUPPORT HE ENJOYS.

6. MOLYVIATIS SAID THE PRIME MINISTER HAD BEEN QUITE UPSET THIS PAST WEEKEND OVER THE LEAK IN WASHINGTON CONCERNING THE SECRETARY'S PROPOSAL FOR A MEETING WITH THE GREEK AND TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTERS. THERE WAS ALSO CONSIDERABLE UNHAPPINESS IN ATHENS OVER THE REMARKS OF THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN THAT HE WAS NOT AWARE OF ANY PARTICULAR PROBLEMS WITH THE GOG OVER U.S. AID TO TURKEY. (MOLYVIATIS WAS AWARE OF THE CLARIFICATION BOB ANDERSON ISSUED IN THIS RESPECT ON FEBRUARY 1--STATE 23919--BUT HE SAID THIS WAS THE SECOND TIME THAT THIS KIND OF COMMENT HAD BEEN MADE IN WASHINGTON.)

7. ALTHOUGH THERE WAS NO DOUBT ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S PART OR ELSEWHERE WITHIN THE GOG ABOUT THE SECRETARY'S SINCERITY AND DETERMINATION TO DO EVERYTHING HE CAN TO SEEK A CONSTRUCTIVE OUTCOME IN CYPRUS, THESE DEVELOPMENTS RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE REAL PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSED MEETING OF THE THREE FOREIGN MINISTERS. BECAUSE OF THIS, AND IN VIEW OF THE GREAT IMPORTANCE WHICH CARAMANLIS ATTACHES TO THE MEETING, MOLYVIATIS EMPHASIZED AGAIN THAT IT WAS OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE THAT THE SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH BITSIOS AND ESENBEL BE A SUCCESS. FAILURE TO PRODUCE TANGIBLE, CONSTRUCTIVE RESULTS COULD, IN MOLYVIATIS' OPINION, LEAD TO SOME RASH ACTION ON THE PART OF THE GOG WHICH, OUT OF FRUSTRATION AND DESPAIR, MIGHT REACT (AND HE DID NOT GIVE ANY HINT AS TO WHAT THIS COULD BE), REGARDLESS OF THE CONSEQUENCES FOR GREECE.
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